A SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Book Three

THE PROBLEM OF SIN

AND THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW

Why Humanity Needs a Savior

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 3:23

Established Upon the Authority of Holy Scripture

King James Version

Preface: Why This Must Come Before Salvation

It is impossible to appreciate a cure without first understanding the disease. The gospel of Jesus Christ — with its repentance, its baptism, its outpouring of the Holy Ghost — is the answer to a specific problem. That problem is sin. And before a student can rightly understand what salvation accomplishes, what it costs, why it requires what it requires, and why nothing less could suffice, they must first understand what sin is, what it does, and why the human race is utterly helpless to remedy it on its own.

This is why Book Three comes before the books on salvation. A person who does not understand the depth of the human problem will not understand

the necessity of the divine solution. They will misread grace as optional. They will misread obedience as legalism. They will misread the demands of the gospel as excessive. But a person who has looked honestly at what sin is, what it has done to the human race, and what it cost God to remedy it — that person will find in the gospel not a burden but a rescue.

This book proceeds through eight chapters:

- Chapter One examines the nature and origin of sin — what it is, where it came from, and what it has done to humanity.
- Chapter Two addresses the function of the Law: not to save, but to diagnose and condemn, preparing the sinner for grace.
- Chapter Three traces the covenant structure — Old and New — and explains what changed, what was fulfilled, and what endures.
- Chapter Four presents grace: God's unearned, undeserved, initiative-taking love for a race that cannot help itself.
- Chapter Five addresses the critical relationship between grace and obedience — the most misunderstood pairing in Christian theology.
- Chapter Six examines key objections to the doctrines presented, with exegetical responses to each.
- Chapter Seven provides a key terms and technical reference for Greek and Hebrew vocabulary used throughout the book.
- Chapter Eight contains a study guide and review questions for individual study, small group discussion, or classroom instruction.

Chapter One: The Nature and Origin of Sin

Every theological system must answer the same foundational question: what is wrong with humanity? The Bible's answer is not ignorance, not weakness, not poor social conditions, not inadequate education. The Bible's answer is sin. And the biblical doctrine of sin is both more radical and more specific than most people have been taught.

1.1 What Sin Is: The Biblical Definitions

Scripture uses several distinct words and concepts to describe sin, each illuminating a different facet of the same reality. Together they form a comprehensive portrait of what sin is and why it is so serious.

Sin as Missing the Mark (Hamartia)

The most common New Testament word for sin is the Greek hamartia (ἁμαρτία), from the verb hamartano, which in classical Greek was used of an archer who missed the target. Sin, in this sense, is a failure to reach the standard God established — the mark of his own perfect character and law. Every human being, without exception, has missed this mark.

> **Romans 3:23**
>
> "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*"

The phrase 'come short' (Greek: hystereo — to fall behind, to lack, to be deficient) describes not merely an occasional failure but a persistent deficiency. To come short of the glory of God is not to stumble once; it is to be constitutionally unable to reach the standard that God's character demands.

Sin as Lawlessness (Anomia)

> **1 John 3:4**
>
> "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*"

The Greek word translated 'transgression of the law' is anomia (ἀνομία) — literally, without law, or lawlessness. This definition locates sin in relation to God's revealed standard. Sin is not merely subjective wrongdoing; it is objective violation of what God has commanded. This is why the conscience, however useful as a general guide, is insufficient as the final standard: it can be seared (1 Timothy 4:2), suppressed (Romans 1:18), and deceived. The law of God is the objective, external standard against which sin is measured.

Sin as Unrighteousness (Adikia)

> **1 John 5:17**
>
> "*All unrighteousness is sin.*"

Adikia (ἀδικία) means injustice, wrongness, the absence of what is right. This definition ties sin to the character of God himself: God is righteous (dikaios), and sin is the departure from that righteousness.

It is not merely rule-breaking; it is a departure from the very nature of the God in whose image human beings were made.

Sin as Debt

> **Matthew 6:12**
>
> "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*"

Jesus himself frames sin as a debt in the Lord's Prayer. This is not incidental metaphor; it is a precise theological description. Sin creates an obligation — a moral debt that must be paid. The debtor cannot pay it himself; the debt is too great. This is why atonement is necessary: the debt must be satisfied, and only God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, can satisfy it.

1.2 The Origin of Sin: The Fall

> **Genesis 3:6--7**
>
> "*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*"

The Fall of Adam and Eve is not merely a story about two people making a bad choice in a garden. It is the event that fractured the relationship

between the Creator and his creation, introduced spiritual and physical death into the human experience, and established the pattern of sin — the self-willed departure from God's explicit command — as the defining characteristic of the fallen human race.

The Anatomy of the Fall

Genesis 3 reveals a three-stage pattern that recurs throughout human history and in every individual act of sin:

1. Deception: The serpent misrepresented God's command and character ('Yea, hath God said?' — verse 1). Sin always begins with a distorted view of God — of his goodness, his authority, or his purposes.
2. Desire: Eve saw that the tree was 'good for food,' 'pleasant to the eyes,' and 'to be desired to make one wise' (verse 6). These three categories — physical appetite, aesthetic appeal, and pride of knowledge — are exactly what 1 John 2:16 identifies as the 'lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' The patterns of temptation are consistent across Scripture.
3. Disobedience: She ate, and gave to her husband. The act of rebellion against God's explicit command followed the deception and the desire. This is the sequence: corrupted understanding of God → awakened desire for the forbidden → act of disobedience.

The Consequences of the Fall

The consequences of Adam's sin were not limited to Adam and Eve. They extended to all of their descendants — to the entire human race.

> **Romans 5:12**
>
> "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*"

Paul traces the entrance of sin and death into the world to a single point: one man, one act, one catastrophic consequence that 'passed upon all men.' The Greek word translated 'passed upon' (dierchomai — to come through, to

spread through) describes the transmission of death through the human race as a universal condition, not merely a series of individual failures. This is what theologians call original sin: the condition of spiritual death and moral corruption that all human beings inherit from Adam.

The Extent of the Damage

Sin did not merely introduce behavioral failures into an otherwise healthy human nature. It damaged the human nature itself — the capacity to know God, to desire him, and to obey him. This is why regeneration — the new birth — is not merely moral improvement. It is a new creation.

> **Romans 3:10--12**
>
> "*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*"

Paul is quoting from Psalms 14 and 53. The indictment is comprehensive: none righteous, none understanding, none seeking God, all gone out of the way. This is not hyperbole. It is the honest diagnosis of a fallen humanity. The natural man does not seek God; he flees from him (Genesis 3:8). He suppresses the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). He loves darkness rather than light (John 3:19). This is the human condition apart from grace.

For the New Believer

> *You were not born morally neutral, waiting to make a choice that would determine your direction. You were born into a race that is already turned away from God, already under the sentence of death, already in need of rescue. The gospel is not an improvement offer; it is a rescue mission.*

For the Teacher or Pastor

> *The depth of your congregation's hunger for grace will be proportional to their understanding of the depth of their need. A shallow doctrine of sin produces a shallow appreciation of salvation. Teach sin honestly, and grace will be received gratefully.*

1.3 The Wages and Consequence of Sin

> **Romans 6:23**
>
> "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

The word 'wages' (Greek: opsonia — a soldier's pay, compensation earned for service rendered) is deliberately chosen. Death is not an arbitrary punishment imposed from outside. It is what sin earns. It is the natural consequence of separation from the Source of life. When a branch is severed from a vine, it does not die because of a penalty externally imposed; it dies because it has been separated from the source of its life. Sin separates from God. Separation from God is death.

Three Dimensions of Death

Scripture uses the word 'death' in three distinct but related senses, all of which are consequences of sin:

- Spiritual death: the immediate consequence of the Fall — separation from God, the loss of the life that only the presence of God can provide (Ephesians 2:1 — 'dead in trespasses and sins').
- Physical death: the eventual dissolution of the body — introduced into human experience by the Fall (Genesis 3:19 — 'for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return').
- Eternal death: the final, irreversible separation from God for those who die in an unregenerate state (Revelation 20:14 — 'This is the second death'). The gospel of Jesus Christ addresses all three dimensions. The

new birth restores spiritual life. The resurrection will restore physical life. And those who are found in Christ at the judgment will escape the second death entirely. This is the full scope of what salvation accomplishes — and it is only fully visible when the full scope of what sin has done is honestly reckoned with.

Chapter Two: The Function of the Law

If sin is the disease, the Law is the diagnosis. This is a critical distinction, and one that has been confused in both directions throughout church history. Some have treated the Law as the cure — teaching that obedience to God's commands is the pathway to salvation.

Others have dismissed the Law entirely, treating it as irrelevant to the Christian life. Both errors misread what Scripture says the Law is for.

2.1 The Law Is Good — but It Cannot Save

> **Romans 7:12**
>
> "*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*"

Paul is emphatic: the Law is not the problem. The Law of God is holy, just, and good. It perfectly reflects the character of the God who gave it. The problem is not the Law; the problem is the fallen human being who cannot keep it. To blame the Law for humanity's inability to be saved by it is like blaming a yardstick for the fact that a board is too short. The standard is not at fault. The material is.

> **Romans 7:7**
>
> "*I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*"

Paul identifies the Law's first and primary function: revelation of sin.

Before the Law was given, sin existed — but it was not clearly defined, named, and measured. The Law names what sin is. It draws the line between obedience and disobedience, between what God requires and what the fallen human nature naturally does. Without the Law, the sinner does not know he is a sinner. He may feel vague guilt or unease, but the sharp specificity of transgression — 'you have violated this commandment' — requires the Law.

The Law as Mirror

The classic Reformation image of the Law as a mirror is drawn directly from Scripture. James 1:23-24 compares a man who hears the Word but does not do it to someone who looks at his natural face in a mirror and immediately forgets what he looks like. The mirror shows you what is there. It does not remove it.

The Law shows the sinner exactly what God requires and exactly what the sinner has failed to provide. It leaves no room for self-justification, no avenue for claiming partial credit, no basis for comparison with other sinners. The standard is God's character, and no human being meets it.

> **Romans 3:19--20**
>
> "*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*"

Every mouth stopped. All the world guilty. No flesh justified. These are not the conclusions of a pessimistic theologian; they are Paul's statement of what the Law was designed to accomplish: the silencing of every human claim to self-sufficiency and the universal declaration of guilt before a holy God. This is the Law fulfilling its purpose perfectly.

2.2 The Law as Schoolmaster

> **Galatians 3:24--25**

> "*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*"

The Greek word translated 'schoolmaster' is paidagogos (παιδαγωγός). In the Greco-Roman world, the paidagogos was not the teacher — he was the trusted slave who accompanied the child to school, ensuring safe arrival and keeping him in order along the way. His role was preparatory and guardian: he did not teach the subject matter himself, but he delivered the child to the one who would.

The Law is the paidagogos of the gospel. Its role is not to save but to prepare — to convict the sinner of his guilt, to silence his self-justification, and to drive him to the only One who can actually save him: Jesus Christ. The Law that condemns you is the very Law that, by condemning you, sends you to the only remedy for condemnation. This is its purpose, and it is a gracious one.

Key Distinction

> *The Law does not save — but it is essential to salvation, because without the Law's conviction there is no genuine repentance, and without genuine repentance there is no genuine turning to Christ. A sinner who has never felt the weight of the Law's condemnation has never properly understood what he needs to be saved from.*

2.3 What the Law Cannot Do

> **Hebrews 10:1--4**
>
> "*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have*

> *had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*"

The writer of Hebrews provides the definitive statement on the limits of the Law's sacrificial system. If the Law's sacrifices had actually removed sin, they would only have needed to be offered once. But they were offered annually — perpetually repeated, because they perpetually failed to accomplish a final removal. They covered. They did not cleanse.

This is the crucial distinction between the Old Covenant's operation and the New:

OLD COVENANT:

> *The blood of animals covered sin annually — a temporary, repeated remedy that pointed forward to something better.*

NEW COVENANT:

> *The blood of Jesus Christ removes sin entirely, once for all — a final, permanent remedy that what the Old Covenant could only anticipate.*

> **Acts 22:16**
>
> "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*."

The language of washing away sin is New Covenant language. It is not the language of the annual covering of the Day of Atonement. It is the language of permanent removal. The Law prepared humanity to receive this — by demonstrating, across centuries of repeated sacrifice, that no human institution and no animal blood could accomplish what God alone could accomplish through the offering of his own Son.

2.4 The Moral Law and the Ceremonial Law

A distinction of considerable importance must be drawn here, because the change of covenant (addressed in Chapter Three) does not mean the abolition of all law. The Law of God can be understood in at least three categories:

- The moral law: the unchanging ethical standards rooted in the character of God himself — the prohibition of murder, theft, adultery, bearing false witness, covetousness. These are not abolished in the New Covenant; they are written on the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:16; Jeremiah 31:33).
- The ceremonial law: the sacrificial, ritual, and liturgical system of the Levitical priesthood — the offerings, the feasts, the dietary codes, the cleansing rituals. These were shadows pointing to Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1). When the substance arrived, the shadows were fulfilled and their obligatory force passed away.
- The civil law: the specific governance codes given to Israel as a theocratic nation — the legal penalties, the land tenure laws, the census and taxation provisions. These were specific to Israel's national covenant and do not bind the New Covenant church as civil legislation. The change of covenant eliminates the obligatory force of the ceremonial and civil law. It does not eliminate the moral law. A New Covenant believer who commits adultery, murder, or theft has sinned — not because they are under the Mosaic covenant, but because the moral law written on their heart by the Holy Spirit reflects the eternal character of God, which does not change.

For the Teacher

> *Much confusion in the modern church comes from failure to distinguish these categories. Applying ceremonial law obligations (tithing percentages, dietary restrictions, Sabbath observance as the seventh day) to New Covenant believers while simultaneously declaring them free from the moral law's*

> *demands is a double error. The moral law endures; the ceremonial system has been fulfilled.*

Chapter Three: The Covenant Structure — Old and New

To understand why the Law does not save under the New Covenant — and what has changed — the student must understand the covenant structure of Scripture. The Bible is not a flat collection of equally applicable commands. It is a covenantal document: a record of God's binding self-commitments to his people through successive covenants, each one building on and partially superseding what came before, until the final and superior New Covenant inaugurated in the blood of Jesus Christ.

3.1 The Old Covenant: Its Purpose and Its Limits

> **Hebrews 8:6--7**
>
> "*But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*"

The writer of Hebrews is explicit: the first covenant was not faultless.

Its inadequacy was not incidental — it was designed. The Old Covenant was a temporary structure, given for a specific period in redemptive history, designed to prepare a people for a greater covenant yet to come. Its fault was not in its commands but in the material it worked with: it depended on the obedience of a fallen human nature that could not consistently provide it.

> **Hebrews 8:8--10**
>
> "*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:*

> *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt... For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*"

The New Covenant is announced here by Jeremiah (quoted in Hebrews 8) before it was inaugurated. Its distinguishing feature: the law written not on tablets of stone but on the heart. The Old Covenant said 'obey, and I will bless.' The New Covenant says 'I will change you so that obedience flows from within.'" This is the work of regeneration — the new birth that the Holy Ghost produces in the converted believer.

3.2 The Change of Priesthood and the Change of Law

> **Hebrews 7:11--12**
>
> "*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*"

This is one of the most legally precise statements in the New Testament.

The Law of Moses was built around the Levitical priesthood. The priesthood was the mechanism through which the law's sacrificial requirements were fulfilled. When the priesthood changed — when Christ became the eternal High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, replacing the Levitical order — the law necessarily changed as well.

This is not an abolition of all law. It is the supersession of one covenantal system by a superior one. The change of priesthood meant that the entire Levitical machinery of atonement — the annual sacrifices, the Day of

Atonement, the system of priestly mediation — had been fulfilled and rendered obsolete. Not erased from history. Fulfilled.

> **Matthew 5:17**
>
> "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*"

Christ fulfilled the Law. This means he met its demands perfectly in his own person and completed the purpose for which it was given. A shadow does not need to be destroyed when the substance arrives; it simply becomes irrelevant as an independent guide, because what it pointed to is now present.

3.3 The New Covenant: What It Accomplishes

> **Hebrews 10:10, 14**
>
> "*By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*"

The contrast with the Old Covenant's annual sacrifices could not be sharper. Once for all (Greek: ephapax — once, once and never again).

Perfected forever. The New Covenant does not cover sin and wait for next year's sacrifice. It removes sin permanently, in a single act of infinite and sufficient atonement. This is what the Old Covenant's entire sacrificial apparatus was pointing toward and could not itself accomplish.

What the New Covenant accomplishes:

- Permanent remission of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:26; Acts 2:38)
- Regeneration of the human heart through the indwelling Holy Ghost (Ezekiel 36:26--27; John 3:5)
- The law written on the heart rather than on stone (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 10:16)

- Direct, unmediated access to God through Christ, the one Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:16)
- The indwelling presence of God through the Holy Spirit given to every believer (Acts 2:38--39; Romans 8:9)

The Covenantal Watershed

> *The cross is the event that changed everything. The veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). The old system of mediated access through Levitical priesthood was ended. The New Covenant — in the blood of Christ — went into legal force at his death (Hebrews 9:17). Pentecost was its first outpouring. Every believer who has since been born again has entered the New Covenant.*

3.4 What Did NOT Change: The Enduring Moral Standard

The covenant changed. The moral character of God did not. The obligation to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:29-31) — these are not Mosaic innovations. They are expressions of the eternal character of the God who made human beings in his image. They did not expire at the cross.

In fact, the New Covenant raises the moral standard rather than lowering it. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5--7) takes the Mosaic prohibitions and internalizes them: it is not enough to avoid murder; lust in the heart is already adultery. The New Covenant does not give the believer more freedom to sin; it gives the believer the power, through the indwelling Spirit, to avoid it.

> **Romans 8:3--4**
>
> *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness*

> *of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

The righteousness the Law demanded but could not produce is now fulfilled in those who walk after the Spirit. The New Covenant believer, empowered by the indwelling Holy Ghost, is able to do what the Old Covenant Israelite, dependent on his own moral effort, was not: genuinely love God and neighbor from the heart, not merely comply externally with an external code.

Chapter Four: Grace — The Gift of God to Helpless Humanity

Having established the depth of the human problem — sin, death, the inability of the Law to save, and the inadequacy of the Old Covenant — we now arrive at the answer. The answer is not a system, not a philosophy, not a program of moral improvement. The answer is a Person, and the basis on which that Person saves is grace: the unearned, undeserved, initiating love of God for a race that has no claim on his mercy.

4.1 The Definition of Grace

The Greek word for grace is charis (χάρις). In classical Greek, charis described the quality of a gift that delighted the recipient — beauty, favor, charm. In the New Testament, it takes on its distinctively theological meaning: the unmerited favor of God, his free and unearned gift to those who deserve only judgment.

Grace must be carefully distinguished from two related but different concepts:

GRACE is NOT:

> *mercy given because the recipient is deserving, or a reward for partial obedience, or a divine supplement to human effort.*

GRACE IS:

> *God's free, sovereign, initiating love given to the completely undeserving — not because of what we are, but because of who he is.*

> **Romans 5:8**

> "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"

The word 'commendeth' (Greek: synistemi — to demonstrate, to prove, to establish) indicates that God is providing evidence of his love. And what is that evidence? Not that we were seeking him, not that we had partially reformed ourselves, not that we showed potential. While we were yet sinners. The timing is everything. Before repentance. Before faith. Before any human movement toward God. Christ died. That is grace.

4.2 The Paradigm Case: Abraham

> **Romans 4:2--5**

> "*For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*"

Paul uses Abraham as the paradigm case of grace because Abraham's justification preceded both circumcision and the Mosaic law. He was justified in Genesis 15 — before his circumcision in Genesis 17, and centuries before the Law was given at Sinai. This means the principle of grace-through-faith is older than every covenant structure except the original promise of God. It is not a New Testament novelty introduced to

correct the Old Testament's legalism. It is the bedrock principle of God's dealings with humanity across all of redemptive history.

Paul's logical argument is airtight: if God justifies the ungodly (verse 5 — not the partly godly, not the trying-hard godly, but the ungodly), then justification is by definition not a reward for merit. A reward for merit is a debt — something owed. Justification by grace is not a debt; it is a gift. These two categories are mutually exclusive.

4.3 The Scope of Grace: No One Is Beyond It

> **Isaiah 1:18**
>
> "*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*"
>
> **1 Timothy 1:15**
>
> "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*"

Paul, writing to Timothy, describes himself as the chief of sinners — the man who had persecuted and murdered the church of God (Acts 8:3; 9:1). If grace could reach him, it can reach anyone. The scope of grace is as wide as the problem of sin: it covers every human being who will receive it, regardless of the depth or history of their transgression.

> **Acts 2:39**
>
> "*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*"

Peter's declaration on the day of Pentecost extends the promise of salvation without geographical, ethnic, generational, or historical limit. The New Covenant is not a Jewish refinement of the Old. It is an open, universal offer of grace to 'all that are afar off' — which includes every reader of this book.

4.4 Grace and the Atonement

Grace is not the suspension of God's justice. It is the satisfaction of it. This is the profound logic of the cross: God could not simply ignore sin without violating his own righteous character. The debt had to be paid. But the debtor could not pay it. So God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, paid it. The cross is not where justice was set aside for mercy. It is where justice and mercy met in the single act of infinite atonement.

> **Romans 3:25--26**
>
> "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*"

The Greek word translated 'propitiation' is hilasterion (ἱλαστήριον) — the same word used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) for the mercy seat, the cover of the Ark of the Covenant where the high priest sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement. God set forth Christ as the mercy seat — the place where his just wrath against sin was satisfied and his forgiving grace was made available.

The cross is both the demonstration of God's justice (sin must be dealt with) and the provision of God's grace (it has been dealt with, in Christ, for all who will receive him).

The Heart of the Gospel

> *Grace is not God looking away from sin. Grace is God taking the full weight of sin's consequences upon himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, so that the sinner who receives him can be declared righteous without God's justice being compromised. The cross is where God is both just and the justifier.*

Chapter Five: Grace and Obedience — The Most Misunderstood Pairing

No doctrinal confusion has produced more theological damage in the modern church than the confusion between grace and obedience. On one side, legalism teaches that obedience earns grace — that salvation is, at least in part, the reward for adequate religious performance. On the other side, antinomianism teaches that grace eliminates obedience — that since salvation is entirely God's gift, human obedience is either irrelevant or optional. Both are errors. Both are addressed directly by Scripture.

5.1 Grace and Obedience Are Not Opposites

> **Ephesians 2:8--9**
>
> "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

This passage is among the most cited in the New Testament — and among the most consistently misread in its isolation from its context. Paul is emphatically clear: salvation is by grace, through faith, not of works.

No human being can boast in their salvation as a reward for their own effort. This is foundational and non-negotiable.

But note what Paul says immediately after:

> **Ephesians 2:10**
>
> "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"

The same Paul who declares that works cannot save declares in the very next breath that the saved are created for good works. Grace does not eliminate the walk of obedience; it creates the capacity for it. The one who is

saved by grace is now able, through the indwelling Spirit, to walk in the good works that the old, unregenerate nature could never sustain.

5.2 The Grace-Obedience Sequence

Scripture's consistent pattern is not 'obey, then receive grace' (legalism) nor 'receive grace, then optionally obey' (antinomianism).

The biblical pattern is:

4. God's grace reaches the sinner — through the proclamation of the gospel, the conviction of the Holy Ghost, the drawing of the Father (John 6:44).
5. The sinner responds in obedient faith — repenting, being baptized, receiving the Holy Ghost. This is not earning grace; it is receiving it. The response is required not as payment but as the appointed means of reception.
6. The Spirit indwells the obedient believer — writing the law on the heart, producing the fruit of righteousness, enabling the ongoing walk of holiness.
7. The obedient life flows from the regenerate nature — not as a condition for retaining grace, but as the natural expression of a nature that has been genuinely transformed. This sequence is illustrated most clearly in the New Testament's consistent use of gift-and-instruction language. A benefactor gives a gift freely. But he may leave instructions for its receipt — a specific address to which it must be claimed, a specific manner in which it must be received. The gift is entirely free; the benefactor owes nothing. But the recipient who ignores the instructions has not received the gift, regardless of how sincerely they believe it is theirs.

> **Hebrews 5:9**
>
> "*And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*"

Eternal salvation is given by Christ to all who obey him. This is not works-salvation; it is the biblical pattern of grace received through appointed

obedience. The obedience does not purchase the salvation. The obedience is the avenue through which grace's gift is received.

5.3 The Antinomian Error: 'Grace Means No Commands'

> **Romans 6:1--2**
>
> "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*"

Paul anticipates the antinomian reading of his own doctrine and repudiates it with the strongest possible negative in Greek: me genoito (μὴ γένοιτο — may it never be, God forbid, absolutely not). The logic is not merely that continuing in sin is improper for the saved. The logic is ontological: the person who has been genuinely saved has died to sin. You cannot continue living in what you have died to. Grace does not provide cover for ongoing, willful disobedience; it produces a new nature that no longer wants to live that way.

> **Titus 2:11--12**
>
> "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*"

Grace teaches. This is a remarkable statement. The grace that saves is the same grace that disciplines and instructs — producing a life of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. Grace is not passive. It is not merely the removal of a penalty. It is an active, transforming power that reshapes the life it enters. The person who claims to have received grace but shows no evidence of its transforming work has reason to examine whether they have actually received it.

5.4 The Legalist Error: 'Obedience Earns Salvation'

> **Galatians 2:21**
>
> "*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*"

The legalist error is the mirror image of the antinomian error. If obedience could earn salvation — if human religious performance could accumulate sufficient merit to justify the sinner before God — then the death of Christ was unnecessary. This is Paul's decisive argument: the fact that Christ died proves that righteousness cannot come by law-keeping. The cross is the evidence that the law-keeping route is closed.

The teacher who adds human merit to the finished work of Christ does not honor Christ's sacrifice; he implicitly diminishes it. He suggests that what Christ accomplished was insufficient, requiring human supplement.

This is the error Paul calls 'frustrating the grace of God' — setting it aside, making it of no effect, acting as though it were not enough.

The Balanced Position

> *Obedience does not earn grace — but grace that produces no obedience is not the grace of the New Testament. The evidence of genuine salvation is not perfect performance, but a genuine new nature that desires, pursues, and grows in the walk of obedience that the Holy Spirit enables. This is the consistent testimony of every apostolic writer.*

5.5 The New Covenant Promise: Obedience From Within

> **Hebrews 10:16--17**
>
> "*This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in*

> *their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*"

The New Covenant resolves the tension between grace and obedience not by eliminating the demand for obedience but by supplying the power to fulfill it from within. The Old Covenant demanded obedience from a nature that could not consistently provide it. The New Covenant gives a new nature — through the new birth, through the indwelling Holy Ghost — from which obedience flows naturally.

This is the great promise of Ezekiel 36:26-27: 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' The Spirit causes the obedience. Not by compulsion, but by transformation. The obedient life is not the condition for receiving the Spirit; it is the fruit of having received him.

Chapter Six: Key Objections Examined

6.1 'Salvation Is By Faith Alone — Obedience Has No Role'

OBJECTION:

> "*Ephesians 2:8-9 says salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. Any requirement of obedience — repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost — is adding works to the gospel.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** This objection conflates two different senses of the word 'works.' The works Paul excludes in Ephesians 2:9 are works of human merit — the accumulated religious achievement by which a person might claim to deserve salvation. These are excluded absolutely. But the New Testament consistently describes a response to the gospel —

> repentance, faith, baptism, receiving the Spirit — that is not a claim of merit but an act of reception.

A drowning man who reaches for the life preserver thrown to him is not saving himself by works. He is receiving the salvation that someone else has provided, through the appointed means of reception. His act of reaching does not make him the author of his own salvation; it makes him the recipient of it. Obedient faith — the response God has appointed for receiving the gift of grace — is not merit. It is reception.

Furthermore, Ephesians 2:10 immediately follows the famous passage on grace with the declaration that the saved are created for good works.

The passage does not teach faith without obedience; it teaches obedience that flows from grace, not obedience that earns grace.

6.2 'The Law Is Abolished — Christians Are Under No Commands'

OBJECTION:

> "*Romans 10:4 says Christ is the end of the law. Galatians 3:25 says we are no longer under a schoolmaster. The Law is done away with.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** Christ is the telos (end, fulfillment, goal) of the law — Romans 10:4. Not its destruction. The distinction between the moral law, ceremonial law, and civil law (Chapter Two of this book) is essential here. The ceremonial and civil dimensions of the Mosaic law have been fulfilled in Christ and no longer bind New Covenant believers as obligatory legislation. The moral law — rooted in the character of God — is written on the believer's heart by the Holy Spirit and continues to define the shape of a holy life.

Galatians 3:25 ('no longer under a schoolmaster') means we are no longer under the Law as the means of access to God — we have arrived at Christ, to whom the schoolmaster was leading. It does not mean that the moral

standards of God's character no longer apply. Paul himself, in the same letter to the Galatians (5:19-21), lists the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit — both of which presuppose a moral standard that distinguishes them.

6.3 'All Have Sinned Means No One Is Worse Than Anyone Else'

OBJECTION:

> "*Since all have sinned and fallen short, no one's sin is worse than another's. All are equal before God.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** In terms of the universal need for grace and the impossibility of self-justification, yes — all are equal before God. No human being can stand on their own merits before a holy God. In that sense the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

But Scripture does not teach that all sins are equally severe in their consequences, their damage to others, or their standing before God.

Jesus himself speaks of greater and lesser condemnation (Matthew 11:22-24; Luke 12:47-48). John speaks of sins that do and do not lead to death (1 John 5:16-17). The doctrine of universal sinfulness is a statement about humanity's universal need for grace — not a statement that all moral distinctions are erased.

Chapter Seven: Key Terms and Technical Reference

7.1 Hebrew Terms

> ***Chata (חטא) —*** to miss the mark, to sin — the primary Old Testament word for sin, paralleling the Greek hamartia
>
> ***Avon (עון) —*** iniquity, perversity, moral twistedness — describes the distorted nature produced by sin, not merely individual acts

Pesha (פשע) — transgression, rebellion — the willful aspect of sin; choosing to cross a known boundary

Berith (ברית) — covenant — the binding self-commitment that structures God's dealings with humanity throughout Scripture

Kaphar (כפר) — to cover, to atone — the mechanism of the Old Covenant's sacrificial system; covering, not removing

Torah (תורה) — instruction, law — the full body of God's revealed instruction, not merely legal code

7.2 Greek Terms

Hamartia (ἁμαρτία) — sin, missing the mark — the most common New Testament word for sin

Anomia (ἀνομία) — lawlessness — sin defined as violation of God's law (1 John 3:4)

Adikia (ἀδικία) — unrighteousness, injustice — sin as departure from what is right (1 John 5:17)

Charis (χάρις) — grace, unmerited favor — God's free gift to the undeserving

Paidagogos (παιδαγωγός) — schoolmaster, guardian — the role of the Law in Galatians 3:24, preparing the sinner for Christ

Hilasterion (ἱλαστήριον) — propitiation, mercy seat — the satisfaction of divine wrath; used of Christ in Romans 3:25

Ephapax (ἐφάπαξ) — once for all, once and never again — used in Hebrews of Christ's single, sufficient sacrifice

Telos (τέλος) — end, fulfillment, goal — used in Romans 10:4; Christ is the fulfillment/goal of the Law, not its destruction

***Me genoito (μὴ γένοιτο)* —** God forbid, may it never be — Paul's strongest negative; used in Romans 6:2 against antinomianism

***Synistemi (συνίστημι)* —** to demonstrate, to prove, to commend — used in Romans 5:8 of God proving his love through the cross

7.3 Theological Terms Explained

Original Sin

The doctrine that all human beings inherit from Adam both the guilt (legal standing before God as condemned) and the corruption (moral inability, the bent toward sin) that resulted from the Fall. The transmission of this condition is described in Romans 5:12--19. Original sin is not the same as personal sin; it is the inherited condition from which personal sin flows.

Atonement

The satisfaction of God's righteous requirements against sin. The Old Testament system of sacrifice provided temporary covering (kaphar). The New Testament atonement through Christ's blood provides permanent removal and propitiation (hilasmos, hilasterion). The atonement is both substitutionary (Christ in our place) and propitiatory (satisfying the wrath of God).

Justification

The legal declaration by God that the sinner is righteous — not because the sinner has become righteous in themselves, but because the righteousness of Christ has been credited to their account.

Justification is forensic (a court declaration) and immediate. It must be distinguished from sanctification, which is the ongoing process of becoming holy.

Sanctification

The ongoing process of being made holy — of the new nature, implanted at regeneration, growing into the full expression of what God intends the redeemed person to be. Sanctification is progressive; justification is instantaneous. Both are works of grace.

Antinomianism

From the Greek anti (against) and nomos (law). The theological error that teaches grace eliminates the believer's obligation to obey God's moral commands. Refuted explicitly in Romans 6:1-2 and Titus 2:11-12.

Legalism

The error that treats obedience as the basis or partial basis for salvation — that human religious performance earns, merits, or contributes to the standing before God that only grace can provide.

Refuted in Galatians 2:21 and Ephesians 2:8-9.

Chapter Eight: Study Guide and Review Questions

Chapter One — The Nature and Origin of Sin

8. What are the three primary New Testament words for sin? Define each one and explain what distinct aspect of sin each word illuminates.
9. Describe the three-stage anatomy of the Fall in Genesis 3. Where do you see this same pattern in temptation today?
10. What does Romans 3:10-12 say about the natural human condition? Is this a statement about individual behavior or about the human condition itself?
11. What are the three dimensions of death that sin introduces? How does the gospel of Jesus Christ address each one?

12. (Advanced) What is the doctrine of original sin? How does Paul's argument in Romans 5:12-19 establish it? What are the main objections to the doctrine, and how does Scripture respond to them?

Chapter Two — The Function of the Law

13. What is the primary function of the Law according to Romans 7:7 and Romans 3:19-20? What does the Law accomplish?
14. What does the image of the Law as a 'mirror' mean? What does a mirror do, and what can it not do?
15. Explain the role of the paidagogos in the Greco-Roman world. How does this help us understand Galatians 3:24?
16. What is the difference between the moral law, the ceremonial law, and the civil law? Which of these endures into the New Covenant, and why?
17. (Advanced) Hebrews 10:1-4 explains why the Old Covenant's sacrifices could not remove sin. What is the author's logic? How does the repetition of the sacrifices itself prove their inadequacy?

Chapter Three — The Covenant Structure

18. What does Hebrews 8:6-7 mean when it says the first covenant was not 'faultless'? Where did the fault lie?
19. What is the distinguishing feature of the New Covenant according to Hebrews 8:10 and Jeremiah 31:33?
20. What does Hebrews 7:12 mean when it says the change of priesthood necessitates a change of law? What changed, and what did not?
21. How does Matthew 5:17 ('I came not to destroy but to fulfil') relate to the change of covenant?
22. (Advanced) Compare Romans 8:3-4 with Ezekiel 36:26-27. How do these two passages describe what the New Covenant accomplishes that the Old Covenant could not? What role does the Holy Spirit play in this?

Chapter Four — Grace

23. Define grace in your own words. What is the difference between grace and mercy? Between grace and reward?
24. Why does Paul use Abraham as the paradigm case of grace? What is the significance of the timing of Abraham's justification?
25. What does the Greek word hilasterion mean? How does it connect the Old Covenant's Day of Atonement with the work of Christ in Romans 3:25?
26. (Advanced) Romans 3:25-26 says God is 'just and the justifier.' What is the theological tension that requires both of these, and how does the cross resolve it?

Chapter Five — Grace and Obedience

27. What is the difference between the legalist error and the antinomian error? Which is more common in your experience of modern Christianity?
28. Describe the biblical grace-obedience sequence from Chapter 5.2. How does this differ from both legalism and antinomianism?
29. What does Paul mean in Titus 2:11-12 when he says grace 'teaches'? What does this tell you about the nature of grace?
30. How does Hebrews 5:9 ('eternal salvation to all who obey him') fit with Ephesians 2:8-9 ('not of works')? Are these verses in tension?
31. (Advanced) In Ezekiel 36:26-27 God promises to 'cause' his people to walk in his statutes. What does this imply about the relationship between the Spirit and obedience? Does this eliminate human responsibility?

A Closing Word: The Diagnosis Prepares the Patient

A doctor who softens the diagnosis to spare the patient's feelings has not been kind. He has withheld the information the patient needs to make the decision to seek treatment. The minister who softens the doctrine of sin — who presents the human condition as merely imperfect rather than spiritually dead, as struggling rather than condemned, as needing

improvement rather than resurrection — has not been gentle. He has withheld the truth his hearers need to understand why the gospel is not an invitation to self-improvement but an offer of rescue to the perishing.

The depth of your gratitude for grace will always be proportional to the depth of your understanding of sin. The church that knows what it was rescued from will treasure what it was rescued to. The believer who has stood honestly before the mirror of the Law — who has seen the dirt the Law reveals, who has understood that no human effort can wash it clean — that believer will receive the gospel of Jesus Christ not as one option among many but as the only hope in an otherwise hopeless situation.

That is what the cross is: the only hope in an otherwise hopeless situation. And it is sufficient. Completely, permanently, irreversibly sufficient. The blood of Jesus Christ — applied through repentance, baptism in his name, and the gift of the Holy Ghost — does what the blood of bulls and goats could never do. It washes away sin. Not covers it. Washes it away.

> **Acts 22:16**
>
> "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*"

Continue to Book Four:

Salvation — What It Is, How It Is Received, How It Is Kept, and How It Must Be Taught